





## EARLY AGRICULTURAL AND MARITIME ACTIVITIES

Much of the history of the Highland resort—and of the Highlands in general—centers on the Small family, who were among the early proprietors of Truro. Isaac Small (1754–1816) lived in a house on the west side of present-day South Highland Road. It was later known as “Tashmuit,” after the Indian name of the area. According to an unpublished brochure issued by the Truro Historical Society, “A liberal translation of the word Tashmuit is ‘place of many springs,’ and it is true that the underlying layer of clay in this region traps ground water and provided many watering places for cattle and other livestock.”

Small was a prosperous farmer and miller, taking advantage of a zone of relatively rich soil known as the Clay Pounds. Henry David Thoreau on his visit to the area around 1850 “perceived at once a difference in the soil, for there was an interruption of the desert, and a slight appearance of sod at our feet.”<sup>1</sup> Truro historian Shebnah Rich describes Small’s property as “uniformly the best land in town, perhaps originally, in the county,” with “dwellings of good dimensions and long corn houses, and ample barns for hay and stock.”<sup>2</sup> Small also operated a windmill for the grinding of corn, located on a little knoll just in front of the entrance to the present-day Highland House.<sup>3</sup> Small’s land extended east to the ocean, and included a 10-acre tract sold to the U.S. government in 1796 to accommodate the construction of the Highland Light (see Appendix A).

The death of Small in 1816 caused his farm to be divided between his two oldest sons, with Joshua (1792–1850) taking the house and land on the west side of South Highland Road, and James (1787–1874) receiving land east of the road. Thereafter, the two segments passed down through separate lines of descent and were never reunited. In 1835 James built a commodious farmhouse on the northeast corner of the intersection of South Highland Road and the road to the lighthouse (see Appendix A).

Thoreau found that many Truro men were “fisherman-farmers and understand better ploughing the sea than the land.”<sup>4</sup> The Small family’s occupation of its distinctively fertile clay deposits, however, enabled it to succeed primarily through the use of land-based resources. There were two exceptions to this. One was a brief venture into salt-making. The other was the involvement of the family in occupations centered around the adjacent lighthouse. Isaac and James Small, as well as other members of the family, served extended periods as keeper of the light. Later, the family’s best-known member was associated with maritime pursuits in a unique and highly individual situation. This occurred when James’ son by his second wife, Isaac Morton (“Mort”)

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<sup>1</sup> Henry David Thoreau, *Cape Cod*, p. 131.

<sup>2</sup> Shebnah Rich, *Truro, Cape Cod*, p. 208.

<sup>3</sup> Unpublished Truro Historical Society brochure.

<sup>4</sup> Thoreau, *Cape Cod*, p. 136.





Small (1845-1934), took charge of the marine telegraph station at Highland Light in 1863.<sup>5</sup> He was then 18, and was to spend 70 years observing the ever-varying panorama of ships passing the Outer Cape.

The marine telegraph line running down the Cape to Provincetown, which had been completed in 1855, represented a major extension of the Boston maritime community's reach.<sup>6</sup> Prior to the construction of the Cape Cod Canal, ships bound for Boston from the south had to pass around the arm of the Cape. Active and influential Boston shipowners had always sought advance warning of merchant ships approaching the harbor. A visual telegraph system was established as early as 1799. In 1801, a carefully planned series of signal stations extended all the way to Martha's Vineyard. The name "Telegraph Hill," found in both Hull and Dorchester, recalls this early period. Later refinements made it possible to transmit detailed identification of incoming ships. One "database" consisted of 112 flags, each representing a different shipowner. This illustrates the abundance and variety that once characterized Boston's seaborne commerce.<sup>7</sup> The telegraph line greatly improved the timeliness of information available to Boston commercial interests. At the same time, it reinforced the Lower Cape's identity as a satellite of Boston.

The advent of the telegraph line opened new vistas for Isaac Small at an opportune moment in his life. In one respect, his responsibilities tied him to his telegraph key. In another sense, however, the telegraph gave him access to wider contacts and knowledge. It seems reasonable to conclude that as a result of this activity, Isaac Small developed more connections with the outside world, and was less dependent on agriculture, than had been customary in his family. The telegraph thus facilitated his rise to leadership in the community.

## THE BIRTH OF TOURISM

The development of tourism at the Highlands can be attributed largely to Isaac M. Small, but he was not responsible for its mostly accidental beginnings. Henry David Thoreau, one of the earliest and perhaps the best-known of the multitude of outsiders who got Cape Cod sand in their

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<sup>5</sup> This presents an example of the confusion about dates one finds in Isaac M. Small's writings. In his 1922 booklet, *Just a Little about the Lower Cape, Personal and Otherwise*, he states that "in March of 1861 I took charge of the Marine Telegraph Station at Highland Light." However, in the same paragraph he says that when he was 16 (1861), he went away to school in Bernardston, MA, an inland town. In *True Stories of Cape Cod*, published posthumously in 1934, he asserts that "In 1863 I was placed in charge of the telegraph office." This would seem logical in terms of his schooling, but two sentences later he states that "In 1863 I took full charge of the telegraph office," implying that it was a separate event.

<sup>6</sup> The actual date of completing the telegraph line to Provincetown, which does not appear in Isaac Small's publications, is from Charles F. Swift, *Cape Cod* (Yarmouth, MA: Register Publishing, 1897), p. 288.

<sup>7</sup> Carl Seaburg, *Boston Observed* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), pp. 52-53; Moses Sweetser, *King's Handbook of Boston Harbor* (Cambridge, MA: Moses King, 1882), p. 38. The visual telegraph system is also mentioned in Samuel Eliot Morrison, *The Maritime History of Massachusetts, 1783-1860* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1921), p. 163.



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shoes, may have inadvertently contributed to the growth of tourist facilities. He made four sojourns to the Cape (1849, 1850, 1855, and 1857), each time tarrying at the Highlands—an area he obviously found fascinating. During the first three visits, if not all four, he stayed in the light keeper's cottage. James Small was the keeper then and lived in the cottage with his family.<sup>8</sup> (In this respect he was "ploughing the sea" with his eyes and his powerful whale oil beacon.)

Thoreau was by no means the impractical dreamer he is sometimes simplistically portrayed. His shrewd perceptive abilities extended to business prospects, although he did not personally exploit them. He recognized early the potential of tourism on the Lower Cape. Writing from the light keeper's cottage, he predicted that "The time must come when this coast will be a place of resort for those New-Englanders who really wish to visit the seaside."<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, he specifically noted the attractiveness of the Truro Highlands, observing that "there is a more uninterrupted view of the Ocean and the Bay, and in the summer there is always some air stirring on the edge of the bank there, so that the inhabitants know not what hot weather is."<sup>10</sup> Thoreau may have confided these speculations to the Smalls around their table.

Thoreau also observed that James Small "has another larger and very good house within a quarter of a mile, unoccupied, where he says he can accommodate several more."<sup>11</sup> Thus, whether or not the naturalist personally stayed there, it appears that James Small's farmhouse was available for lodging. The farmhouse was used to accommodate guests especially during the periods when James was occupying the light keeper's cottage. This supposition is confirmed in later reminiscences of Isaac M. Small who, although sometimes mistaken as to detail, was generally reliable in substance. In *Just A Little about the Lower Cape: Personal and Otherwise*, he recalled that "My father and mother were taking boarders at the beginning and during the Civil War."<sup>12</sup>

Even at that early date a scarcity of accommodations relative to a growing demand was becoming evident, as described in a revealing newspaper report:

HIGHLAND LIGHT, NORTH TRURO

September 3, 1863

DEAR MAJOR: The "season" has been a successful one here, and greatly enjoyed by the crowds that have visited this delightful summer retreat. 'Squire Small [James] has been crowded to an overflow, and many have departed with a sigh that there was no room for them.

In this age of enterprise it seems strange that there are not increased accommodations for the increasing numbers who desire to breathe the healthful and invigorating air of Provincetown and Truro. Many who have

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<sup>8</sup> Telephone interview conducted by Larry Lowenthal with Clive Driver, June 9, 1992. Mr. Driver, who has researched the matter in depth, considers it doubtful that Thoreau ever stayed in the Small farmhouse.

<sup>9</sup> Thoreau, *Cape Cod*, p. 237.

<sup>10</sup> Thoreau, *Cape Cod*, p. 237.

<sup>11</sup> Thoreau, *Cape Cod*, p. 166.

<sup>12</sup> Isaac M. Small, *Just a Little about the Lower Cape, Personal and Otherwise*.





come down in the steamer have been obliged to return the next day because there was no room for them; and many more have not come at all because they knew there was no room for them. . .

Large and small parties from Provincetown and Wellfleet come here every day, and enliven the place by their great diversity of character. To provide for them and her house full of boarders, without any market to go to, tries the ingenuity of Mrs. Small, who can accomplish as much as any other woman.<sup>13</sup>

## ARRIVAL OF THE RAILROAD

Thoreau ventured down the Cape just ahead of the railroad, although he does not explicitly make that observation. On his first visit he was already able to ride "the cars" to Sandwich. By the time of his third visit in 1855, the tracks had reached Hyannis, and the intention of continuing all the way down the Cape was accepted.<sup>14</sup> Observations made closer to home acquainted Thoreau with the impact the railroad would have on the relative isolation and distinctiveness of the Cape. In his day, travel on the Cape's sandy roads was arduous, and long overland journeys were rare. Provincetown, and to a lesser extent Truro, had some of the characteristics of an island, more closely connected to Boston by water than to towns on the Upper Cape. Under these conditions, the resort activity that flourished at the Highlands, including its elements of unplanned and surprising growth, was representative of the first period of Cape Cod tourism.

War and various local and national economic difficulties delayed the ambitious plans of the Cape Cod railroad, so that it took fully 25 years to extend the tracks the length of the Cape from Sandwich to Provincetown. Completion of the final extension from Wellfleet through Truro to Provincetown in July 1873 marked an important historical dividing line.

## Real-Estate Speculation

Popular folklore depicted Cape Codders as being so hopelessly old-fashioned as to be charming, yet it is astonishing how quickly concepts of land value changed with the coming of the railroad. Since the earliest days of settlement, land on the ocean side (or "back") of the Cape had been considered utterly worthless except for salvage. The land was so barren that shelters had been set up so that shipwrecked sailors could survive a night before trekking off in search of human habitation. The first shrill blast of the locomotive whistle, even if still several miles away in Wellfleet, dramatically changed that perception.

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<sup>13</sup> Barnstable *Patriot*, September 8, 1863. Thanks to Bill Quinn for bringing this to light.

<sup>14</sup> Robert H. Farson, *Cape Cod Railroads*.



The rapidity of response was startling. In 1873 an entity called the Cape Cod Land Company filed a plan to develop ocean-front land apparently just north of the Highland Light. Not lacking in boldness, this proposal envisioned the creation of 204 lots, generally 70 by 105 feet, connected by a comprehensive grid of streets.<sup>15</sup> This plan was never implemented, presumably because it coincided with the severe economic downturn of 1873, but it established a trend.

Isaac M. Small himself became involved in a land-development scheme, apparently in anticipation of the coming of the railroad. On September 20, 1872, he and a distant cousin, Edward E. Small, purchased from James Small approximately 17 acres of choice recreational land on the cliffs immediately south of Highland Light and the lighthouse road. James Small was then nearly 85 years old, so the purchase might be considered to have been made in anticipation of his death. However, the relatively distant relationship of Isaac and Edward suggests that financial, rather than family, considerations were paramount. (Edward, born in 1843, was close to Isaac in age but not in genealogy.)<sup>16</sup> These purchases in Truro were almost exactly contemporary with the first efforts at substantial land development for tourism at areas of the Cape and Islands that were generally more advanced, such as Falmouth Heights and Hyannisport.

Nothing was done immediately with this 17 acres of cliff-edge land, presumably because of the depression that began in the following year and, later, Isaac M. Small's absorption with running the enlarged Highland House. However, on February 24, 1894, Isaac M. and Edward E. Small filed plans for a major subdivision of the tract, described as "Delightfully located upon a bluff, 125 feet above and overlooking the Atlantic Ocean and its passing sails."<sup>17</sup> The plan divided the land into 174 lots, most of which measured 60 by 80 feet, arranged on a street grid of 22 blocks. One of the paper streets, Atlantic Avenue, now lies beneath the body of water for which it was named.

### Effect on Tourism

Prior to the coming of the railroad, tourism to Truro and the entire Lower Cape was limited by the isolated nature of the area and the bad roads leading to it. The improved access provided by the railroad removed these limitations. Initially, the population of Truro would swell by only a few hundred in the summer months, but this number increased steadily. Anthony L. Marshall gives a concise account of tourism on the Lower Cape in the first two decades of the 20th century:

Even in those days, there was a sizable number of summer homes in all three sections of town which were owned and occupied for the entire summer by their out of town owners.... There were a number of home owners in the town who took in...vacationers, they were called summer boarders, since they were just that, because they would both room and board at a particular home.

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<sup>15</sup> Barnstable County Plan Book 1, p. 57.

<sup>16</sup> Much of the substance and verification of genealogical information has been provided by Lurana Cook of Truro, who has generously shared her enormous files on the subject.

<sup>17</sup> Barnstable County Plan Book 106, p. 45.





The typical "summer boarder" of the time was an unmarried young man or woman.... Married couples would sometimes be able to rent a section of an occupied home, or a cottage, or an unoccupied home.

Among the people who came to town to vacation or to spend the entire summer, a variety of national origins were represented. There were a number of Irish families, some people of English origin, some of Canadian-French, and many of course were American born and a few other national origins.<sup>18</sup>

In the 1922 booklet *Population and Resources of Cape Cod*, records from 1890 and even earlier indicate that the population of towns on the Cape in general would more than double in the summer months. The author goes on to state that:

One of the industries of the Cape which is rapidly gaining in importance is that to which one citizen of the Cape towns has applied the term 'the entertainment of summer visitors'. With the influx of an increasingly large summer population, opportunity has been afforded to the 'year-round' residents of the Cape to dispose of the produce of their farms and market gardens, and in other ways to profit through catering to the many who sojourn there for a time.<sup>19</sup>

The New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad annually published a substantial illustrated booklet detailing and extolling the recreational attractions of Cape Cod.

## EARLY YEARS OF THE HIGHLAND RESORT

### Creation of the Highland Lodge

The conjunction of the coming of the railroad and the death of James Small in February 1874 created a new opportunity for Isaac M. Small. An added incentive presumably had been provided by his marriage in 1871. Isaac had obtained possession of James Small's farmhouse after James' death. The farmhouse was already being used as a hotel, known as the Small Farm or the Highland Farm. In 1876, Isaac contracted with his second cousin, Abram C. Small, to add to the farmhouse a two-story wing that was actually larger than the original structure.<sup>20</sup> This hotel was known as the Highland House from at least the time of its enlargement until the present Highland House was built in 1906-07. After that time, it became known as the Highland Lodge. (The name "Highland

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<sup>18</sup> Anthony Marshall, *Truro, Cape Cod, As I Knew It*, p. 95.

<sup>19</sup> Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Labor and Industry, *Population and Resources of Cape Cod*, p. 28.

<sup>20</sup> Small, *Just a Little*.



Lodge" will be used hereafter in the report, to distinguish the earlier building from the present-day structure.) This addition was a significant step, representing the first structure in the Highlands (and probably anywhere in Truro) built exclusively for tourist use.

Even after the railroad arrived, transportation to areas away from the rail line remained difficult. Travelers thus tended to choose lodgings that were close to the railroad, being the most convenient and accessible. The Highland resort was somewhat of an exception. The railroad's route through Truro clung to the bay shore, while the Highland resort was situated on the ocean side. However, the resort's existing hotel facilities and its natural attractions apparently outweighed its distance from the railroad. Anthony Marshall recalls that, "In the earlier days, before the coming of the automobile, guests for the Highland House would arrive by train. There they would be met by a driver with horse and carriage and would be driven forthwith to the Highland House."<sup>21</sup> This is confirmed by the town assessors' reports, which show that in 1901 Isaac M. Small owned a large covered wagon, two buggies (one classified as a trap), a truck wagon, and an express wagon.<sup>22</sup>

In another decision that must have been made at least partly with tourism in mind, Isaac M. Small built what became known as the Cliff House in 1880 (see Appendix A).<sup>23</sup> Located just beyond the northern boundary of the lighthouse lot, it served Small both as a residence and a headquarters for his marine-observation activities. It is unlikely that he lived in the Highland Lodge after that time, leaving it free for use solely as a hotel.

### Expansion of the Facilities

Despite active marketing efforts, relatively few Highland lots were sold after the subdivision in 1894—not nearly enough to create a resort community. Isaac M. Small, accustomed to watching the maneuvers of sailing ships, decided upon a new tack. Rather than attempting to sell individual lots for private cottages, he sought to cash in on the expanding tourist trade by enlarging his own facilities. In 1898 he constructed a large cottage on the site of his father's windmill, about 250 feet east of the Highland Lodge (see Appendix A). Since the venerable millstones were used as front steps, the cottage was called Millstone.

The following year Isaac bought Edward E. Small's share of their joint property, with its optimistic profusion of lots, but which the town assessors more prosaically listed as "pasture."<sup>24</sup> Using a portion of this land, he built two identical six-room cottages—the Rock and the Beacon—along the south side of the road to the lighthouse (see Appendix A). These cottages were completed in 1902. Various real-estate transfers within the family shortly thereafter suggest that Isaac was trying to involve his immediate family more directly in the management and income from the growing resort business. This is understandable. Isaac had indisputably followed his father as

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<sup>21</sup> Marshall, *Truro, Cape Cod*, p. 103.

<sup>22</sup> This category of personal property is not listed in the assessors' reports after 1901.

<sup>23</sup> Small, *Just a Little*.

<sup>24</sup> Barnstable County Deed Book 242, p. 379.





the leading man of the vicinity. In addition to his work managing the Highland resort and related farm, he had his duties as marine observer. He also almost constantly held town offices, and he served two terms in the State Legislature.

Willard M. Small had taken over the general operation of the resort on his return from college in 1892 or 1893.<sup>25</sup> He was interested in sports, and under his management the recreational facilities at the Highland resort were expanded steadily. The Highland Lodge contained a pool table, and assessors' records show that a skating rink—product of a craze that flourished in the 1870's and 1880's—stood on the grounds until 1898. A nine-hole golf course was laid out in August 1898, after the tourist season had recovered from the fear of depredations by the Spanish Navy during the Spanish-American War. The golf course occupied some of the land that had been divided into lots. Located on seaside terrain only minimally modified, it recalled the ancestral courses of the other Highlands across the ocean. A combined indoor bowling alley and pool room was erected in 1903, and numerous less-formal sports were available. The variety of lodgings available within the resort complex made it ideal for families as well as single adults.

### Other Area Resorts

Isaac M. Small had taken a leadership position when he constructed the addition to the Highland Lodge in 1876, since this was probably the first structure intended exclusively for tourist use in Truro. However, other persons soon began to develop resorts and cottage colonies, even in the small and remote town of Truro. By the time Small began expanding his facility in the late 1890's and early 1900's, he was no longer a trend-setter.

The major innovator during this period of tourist development in Truro seems to have been Sheldon W. Ball of New York City. Fascinated by the charms of the area on first viewing it around 1890, he purchased some 250 acres of ocean-front land about 3 miles south of Highland Light. Beginning in 1891, he built a colony originally called Ballston Heights by the Sea and later Ballston Beach, containing seven cottages and a "Club House."<sup>26</sup> This spa included some of the features later visible at the Highland resort, including a bowling alley and quaint names for the cottages.

On the bay side, a colony of several cottages was developed at Corn Hill during the period 1898–1902—exactly contemporary with the enlargement at the Highland resort.<sup>27</sup> Unlike the others, this cluster was situated along the railroad and had a small shelter from which trains could be flagged down. The colony was the creation of Lorenzo Dow Baker, Wellfleet's most prominent citizen. Captain Baker had made a fortune by beginning in 1870 the importation of bananas from Central America to the United States. This activity led eventually to the formation of the United Fruit Company. Although he was a Wellfleet sailor of the old school, Baker recognized that the future of the Lower Cape lay with tourism, and he was instrumental in the transition. A decade before he

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<sup>25</sup> *Provincetown Advocate*, August 3, 1911 (Willard M. Small obitua. *y*); Marshall, *Truro, Cape Cod*, p. 103.

<sup>26</sup> *Barnstable Patriot*, June 21, 1892; Marshall, *Truro, Cape Cod*, p. 96.

<sup>27</sup> Marshall, *Truro, Cape Cod*, p. 100.



began the Corn Hill complex, he converted the old buildings on Wellfleet's Mercantile Wharf into the Chequessett Inn, and he added several outlying cottages. The colony at Corn Hill was a satellite of this hotel.<sup>28</sup> The Corn Hill cottages were physically built by Charles W. Snow, who would later work on the well of the Highland House in 1908.

### Early Advertisements for the Highland Resort

Each of these resorts was different enough that they competed only in a general way. During the brief season there was usually enough business to support all of them. Corn Hill highlighted the advantages of the quieter waters of the bay, while Ballston Beach advertised in the New York newspapers and emphasized its direct access to a beach which was usually protected by sandbars.

Meanwhile, the Smalls boasted of their "elevated ground, pure sea air, surf bathing, excellent table, [and] perfect drainage," which combined to make the Highland House "just the place for health and rest."<sup>29</sup> In one of the early advertising brochures for the resort—one dating from 1908-09—the Smalls describe their establishment as follows:

People seeking a quiet, health-giving spot, on the sea-coast of New England, where the demands of fashion are not exacting and where the ocean air with its invigorating properties is undefiled by any malarial conditions, will find the Highlands of Cape Cod particularly adapted to their wants. As a Mecca of rest for the tired pilgrim from the noisy city it has no superior along the Atlantic seaboard. The long bended arm of the Cape stretches seaward into the ocean nearly a hundred miles from the mainland, producing every desirable condition that could be found on an island in the sea, without the isolation of the latter. Three trains daily bring Boston within a four hours' ride. From the high bluffs near the hotel one of the most magnificent marine panoramas in the world is before the visitor. The sea air in all its purity blows constantly across the peninsular....

SURF BATHING is excellent, the average temperature of the water being about 65 degrees. THE BEACH is a smooth, clean, white sand, and the clear waters of the ocean invigorate and strengthen. BATHING SUITS and booths may be hired by the day or month at very trifling cost, or guests can bring their own suits.

DRAINAGE is perfect, there are no annoying odors permeating the air nor contaminating the drinking water; the latter is always pure, fresh and cool.

MILLSTONE COTTAGE, an annex of the hotel, is a pretty, nine room house, finished in hard woods and modernly furnished. Broad piazzas encircle the house and the views of the sea and surrounding country are fine...

Two six room cottages, "THE ROCK" and "THE BEACON" have been added. They will be let by the season or used as an annex of the hotel

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<sup>28</sup> Judy Stetson, *Wellfleet, A Pictorial History* (Wellfleet Historical Society, 1963), pp. 58-59. This book also documents how Wellfleet evolved into a tourist town (pp. 76-79).

<sup>29</sup> Isaac M. Small, "Highland Light" pamphlet, 1891 edition.





as occasion may require. Enquiries in relation to other cottages in this vicinity will be promptly answered.

In 1907 a new hotel was erected just east of Millstone and named Highland House. The old hotel has been improved and changed and named Highland Lodge and used for lodging only, except that the dining room has been converted into a ball room and a piano installed.

In the new house the first floor is devoted to a waiting room, dining room and kitchen. On the second floor are fifteen good sized sleeping rooms and a ladies' toilet. This is called "Highland House."

The Cape at this point is exactly two miles wide and it stretches in a long, slender, gradually narrowing curve to the northwest until it ends at Cape Race in wind swept and sea washed sand dunes. Along this coast is the great ocean thoroughfare of the sea going commerce of New England. You have missed one good thing in your life if you do not make a pilgrimage to this unique and attractive spot.

THE GOLF LINKS here, which have been greatly improved and enlarged, are equal to any in the state in natural attractiveness and are the only links on the ocean side of Cape Cod. From the rolling country on which these grounds are located the great sea is ever in view, with its fleet of passing ships. This part of the country is not a barren waste of desolate sea sand, as people sometimes fall into error of supposing. Gentle rolling moors and green pastures make walking charming and easy.

GAMES AND SPORTS of various kinds are available, consisting of Golf, Tennis, Croquet, Bolo, etc., Up-to-date Bowling Alleys and Pool Table. The golf links and all out of door games are for the use of the guests of the house free of charge. If you play tennis bring your racquets.

THE CUISINE is most excellent, as any former guest of the town [resort?] can testify. With the best of meats from the city markets, fowl of first quality, fish in great variety and taken from the sea daily, vegetables in abundance, growing upon the connecting farm. Everything is nicely cooked and perfectly served, in fact our table is the pride of our house.

OUR TERMS in a general way are from \$1.50 to \$2.50 per day, according to the time and amount of room required. Owing to the continued very high price of all commodities, our rates for 1909 will be practically the same as in 1908....

The following time service of train and boat was in vogue during the summer of 1908. We expect that the same will prevail this season....

Perhaps since summer vacation was a relatively new concept (outside of the upper class) in the early part of the 20th century, the proprietors felt it necessary to provide some basic guidelines in a slightly later advertising brochure dating to 1912-1915.

DON'T wear heavy clothing or fashionable silks at the sea-shore. Wear comfortable clothes and you will be correspondingly happy.

DON'T try to beat the hotel keeper and don't think he is trying to beat you; he is just as anxious to have your vacation a pleasant one as you are to enjoy it.

DON'T go to a mountain or seashore resort on a hot midsummer day, dusty, weary and hungry and immediately rush out over the country in an effort to see how miserable you can make yourself. Rest, dine and spend at least a day in taking in the situation.



DON'T blame the heat and the cold and every evil under the sun on the hotel keeper.

DON'T be selfish, there are other people in the world besides ourselves.

DON'T engage rooms at a summer hotel and at the last moment write that you cannot come, hotel managers are only human.

DON'T in departing leave any of your things.

DON'T expect free rides to and from the station to meet friends or to see them off.

DON'T be exclusive.

DON'T fuss.

DON'T arrive at a strange hotel after dark if you can avoid it.

DON'T go to a summer hotel in mid August for a week's stay and expect to find the best rooms in the house awaiting you.





## PERIOD WHEN THE HIGHLAND HOUSE WAS BUILT

### Construction of the Highland House

By 1906 the Smalls were able to provide up to 40 rooms to meet the needs of the brief but intense vacation season.<sup>30</sup> Still, with tourism on the Cape continuing its remarkable expansion, this number seemed inadequate. Isaac M. Small thus embarked on his most ambitious venture to date: the construction of a large new hotel on elevated land just east of Millstone cottage (see Appendix A).

Work laying the foundation of what was initially called the Highland House Annex began in May 1906, and construction of the building itself began on August 20.<sup>31</sup> S.D. Nickerson of Provincetown, who had also built the Rock and Beacon cottages, was the prime contractor. He was assisted by others, such as C.A. Fuller concerning the foundation and the interior plastering, and a Mr. Cook, who installed the stoves and heaters. It is exceedingly unlikely that a professional architect was involved, judging by the results. The hulking new structure represented the essence of the term "vernacular." It was strictly utilitarian, and any plans must have consisted only of rough working drawings.

The new building was erected with great rapidity, further testifying to its simplicity of design and construction. By September 20, 1906, it was reported that the roof was shingled and that windows and inside studding were being installed.<sup>32</sup> Plastering took place in the following month. Finishing work was stopped for the winter and resumed in March 1907. On April 11 it was reported that, "So far as carpenters and masons are concerned the new Highland House is completed."<sup>33</sup>

Isaac M. Small, among his abundance of activities, was a correspondent for newspapers on Cape Cod and for the Boston *Globe*. His occasional notes in the Provincetown *Advocate* provide much of the sketchy construction history of the new Highland House. In his column of April 18, 1907, he wrote in a tone of amused exasperation that "We are glad to see our friends at the new house, but just at present we are deep in the work of painting and varnishing the interior and if the visits of friends can be deferred for a few weeks, we will then be pleased to show them the house."

On May 30, in time for the 1907 season, the new hotel was considered to be complete. Almost immediately it assumed the name Highland House, a source of lasting confusion with the

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<sup>30</sup> Six rooms each in Rock and Beacon, nine in Millstone, and 19 in the Highland House (figures from Marshall). Some rooms might have been needed for help, but most of the summer employees were probably family members or local residents.

<sup>31</sup> Provincetown *Advocate*, Aug. 30, 1906.

<sup>32</sup> Provincetown *Advocate*, Sept. 20, 1906.

<sup>33</sup> Provincetown *Advocate*, Apr. 11, 1907.



original Highland House, only 100 yards away. Soon the earlier building became known as the Highland Lodge, the name it bore during the remainder of its time as a tourist facility.<sup>34</sup>

Early photographs of the Highland House show a large ell appended to the east end of the south wall of the main house. Available evidence indicates that the ell was part of the original construction of the Highland House. First, remaining construction details indicate that the ell was integral to the main house. Second, the ell appears in the earliest photographs of the Highland House (e.g., figs. 4-5). Third, personal remembrances recall that the ell existed prior to 1921.<sup>35</sup> Fourth, assessors' records do not show any increase in value during those early years commensurate with the size of the ell. Except for a general revaluation in 1914, the only increases were from \$3000 to \$3100 in 1909 and to \$3200 in 1910.

Indeed, there is strong circumstantial evidence to suggest that the ell predated the main house, and that it was obtained from an unknown location and appended to the main house when the latter was built. Evidence for this includes: the three-step difference between the second stories of the two sections; differences in roof lines, interior construction materials, and exterior color (based on an early photograph); and the fact that the ell deteriorated much more rapidly than the main house, leading to its eventual demolition.<sup>36</sup>

The construction of the Highland House, with its large dining room, allowed all of the resort's dining facilities to be concentrated in one building. Laundry facilities for the resort also were concentrated in the new building at an early date. These facilities appear to have been housed in an extension that was built on the east end of the main house. The extension does not appear in the earliest photographs of the Highland House, and so was not original. However, it was probably added around 1909. An item in the *Provincetown Advocate* of May 20, 1909, noted that "Mr. Cook has been doing some plumbing work at the Highland House the past week, connecting up the laundry stoves and boilers and the kitchen sink in the extension." The addition of the extension could have caused the slight increase in the assessed value of the building that took place at about this time.

Irving Horton recalls that the extension was extant and being used for dish-washing when he became acquainted with the resort in 1921.<sup>37</sup> He also remembers a chute in one corner into which trash was dumped; it fell into a horse-drawn cart and was hauled off and dumped in the gully south of the road to the lighthouse. Laundry-washing facilities also were in place in the extension; laundry pressing and storage took place on the second story of the southeast ell.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Truro assessors' reports show that the revised names were applied as early as 1909.

<sup>35</sup> Telephone interview conducted by Larry Lowenthal with Irving Horton, June 9, 1992. Horton's father Walter was the manager of the Highland Farm (adjacent to the Highland resort) for Hayes Small in the 1920's. Irving Horton recalls that the southeast ell of the Highland House was extant in 1921.

<sup>36</sup> Appraiser's Report in Land File 16-2500, Cape Cod NS. Also, telephone interview conducted by Larry Lowenthal with Joe Colliano and Bill Hastings, September 1, 1993; Colliano and Hastings worked at the Highland resort 1952-64 and managed it 1964-69.

<sup>37</sup> Telephone interview conducted by Larry Lowenthal with Irving Horton, Nov. 6, 1992.

<sup>38</sup> Telephone interviews conducted by Larry Lowenthal with Joe Colliano and Bill Hastings, Nov. 6, 1992, and September 9, 1993.



The resort had insufficient water for the new building when it opened. Isaac M. Small writes that "The lack of a sufficient water supply delayed the building of the Highland House. When that problem was overcome by sinking two wells to sea level, a depth of 125 feet, the plant was enlarged, as the ever increasing demand for summer accommodations had outgrown the old hotel."<sup>39</sup> Once again, Small's assessment of the significance of events is accurate, although his recollection of their sequence is faulty. A newspaper report of May 14, 1908—when the Highland House had been completed and occupied for a year—states that "C.W. Snow and workmen are completing the deep well at the Highland House, which they started last fall, driving 100 feet, when they were obliged to stop on account of cold weather."<sup>40</sup>

Despite a water supply that was not fully adequate, the Highland House was used to capacity in its first year. Occupancy (at the entire resort complex) peaked at 104 guests on Sunday, August 18, 1907. The construction of the Highland House made this possible. Not only did it provide additional guest rooms on its second story, but it also freed up former dining space in the old Highland Lodge for conversion to guest rooms. It is uncertain exactly how many new rooms were created in that building.

### Further Expansion of the Resort

The Highland complex remained largely a family enterprise, interrupted by the shockingly unexpected death of Willard M. Small at the age of 38 on July 29, 1911. Noted as an "enthusiastic worker in athletics," he suffered an apparent heart attack during a baseball game at the Highland resort.<sup>41</sup> He was succeeded in the management of the resort by E. Hayes Small (1876–1939), a younger brother of Isaac's second wife. Even before his tragic loss, Isaac—busy with his marine activities, civic duties, and farming—was probably no longer very involved in the operation of the resort. His wife, conversely, did not have much interest in maritime matters, but was deeply involved with the hotel. Isaac described her affectionately as having "a smile that will not wear off" a vital attribute amid the clamor of a busy resort.

Other buildings were added to the complex, though not on the scale of the Highland House (see Appendix A). In 1915 the "Haven" cottage was built between the Rock and the Beacon. An unexpected addition was made in the following year when three coal barges ran aground near the lighthouse. E. Hayes Small laboriously hauled the deck house of one up the cliff and converted it to a five-room cottage. Officially it still carried the barge's nameplate *Coleraine*, but in common usage it was often called simply "the Ship." In 1917 Hayes Small's children received an inheritance, and part of it was used to build a cottage named Margaret Adams, after the benefactor.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Small, *Just a Little*.

<sup>40</sup> Provincetown *Advocate*.

<sup>41</sup> Provincetown *Advocate*, Aug. 3, 1911.

<sup>42</sup> The name is cited as "Margaret Adams" in Isaac M. Small's 1922 booklet, *Just a Little about the Lower Cape*, and in the Massachusetts Historical Commission's inventory form, prepared by the Truro Historical Society. The name in the Truro assessors' reports is "Martha Adams."





A slight break in the "cottage-a-year" program ensued until 1920. In that year Isaac's wife, Lillian J. Small, moved a building she had inherited in North Truro to the north side of the road leading to the lighthouse. This building, formerly a general store and post office, was converted into a five-room cottage known as the "Pilgrim." The Mayflower, a substantial cottage constructed in 1928, represented the final addition to the resort. The layout of the Mayflower, in sharp contrast to that of the Highland House, consisted of nine apartments and eight baths. This suggests that the Highland House, although constructed only 20 years earlier, followed an old-fashioned concept of plumbing requirements and thus became obsolete at a relatively early date.

The family nature of the business was evident in the ownership pattern, for Isaac M. Small did not personally own all of the cottages. For example, his wife Lillian J. Small retained ownership of the Pilgrim cottage, which had come down in her family prior to its move from North Truro to the Highlands area. His daughter Lillian M. Small acquired Willard's share in the Beacon cottage after his death, giving her full ownership. Hayes Small retained ownership of the Coleraine cottage, since he had done the work of salvaging it; he also controlled the Adams cottage as trustee for his children and, after 1933, directly. Hayes Small's family seems to have used Adams as their residence during most of its history, making it unlikely that it saw much use as a summer rental property.

Another cluster of cottages appeared in the vicinity of the lighthouse. Around 1920, Isaac M. Small belatedly and under much different circumstances succeeded in selling some of the lots he had carved out so prolifically in the 1890's. The purchasers were Henry M. (Harry) and May D. Aldrich of Lexington, MA. The Aldriches also acquired adjacent lots that Isaac Small had sold to other individuals in the early part of the century. Henry is better known for adding the "Jenny Lind tower" to the otherwise innocuous landscape. By 1932, the Aldriches owned 25 lots and had built or acquired five cottages, two as large as the Rock and Beacon, the others smaller.<sup>43</sup>

Certain of the lots sold by Isaac M. Small to the Aldriches in the early 1920's contain the restriction that "No structure of any kind shall be erected . . . that shall interfere with play upon Highland House Golf Links as they are laid out at the time this deed is given, so long as the present eastern holes of said links shall be kept as a part of said golf links."

Some of the Aldriches' cottages survived in a derelict condition into the early 1950's. Around 1958, Samuel Aldrich, son of Henry and May, built a four-room cottage on the tract. He died soon thereafter, however, and in 1965 his widow sold the family landholdings—more than 91 acres—to the National Park Service.<sup>44</sup>

The Smalls also continued farming. This was partly because the land was still productive. More importantly, the produce enhanced the quality of food offered to the resort's guests: a "good table" was one of the chief attractions of summer hostelry. Photographs show large gardens near the Highland House, and a few cows and horses were always kept.

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<sup>43</sup> Truro assessors' reports; telephone interview conducted by Larry Lowenthal with Irving Horton, June 9, 1992; interview conducted by Lowenthal with Joe Colliano and Bill Hastings, June 4, 1992.

<sup>44</sup> Cape Cod NS Land Files 16-2503, 16-2534; interviews by Larry Lowenthal with Joe Colliano and Bill Hastings, June 4, 1992, Sept. 1, 1993 (concerning the remains of cottages surviving into the 1950's).



Hayes Small carried on the family traditions of farming and serving in the State Legislature. (In his youth, he had continued still another family tradition by serving as a lighthouse keeper at Duxbury, MA.) He was a progressive farmer: recognizing that general agriculture had a dim future on the Cape, he turned to more modern and specialized pursuits. In 1912 he replaced the Highland House cattle with purebred Holsteins purchased on Nantucket.<sup>45</sup> The number of cows, usually not more than half a dozen, increased dramatically to more than 20 in the early 1930's. Hayes Small also became much more heavily involved in raising swine and fowl in the 1920's, with the number of fowl reaching 2,600 at its peak in 1933.<sup>46</sup> The main barns were not located on Highland resort property, but a variety of ephemeral farm structures (hen houses, corn crib, slaughter house, "smoking room," etc.) stood on land connected with the resort at different points in its history. The Adams cottage, though a quarter of a mile away, was considered to be the farmhouse for the Highland Farm. Thus, when Hayes Small sold the farm to Sumner Horton in 1935, ownership of the cottage was included.<sup>47</sup> Although the Hortons used Adams primarily as their residence, they also rented rooms in it on occasion.<sup>48</sup>

### Life at the Highland Resort

Most of the guests at the Highland House and Cottages—as the complex was usually called—were couples or families, with few if any single people. Their length of stay varied from a few days or a week to an entire summer. Hotel keepers like the Smalls tried to create a warm personal atmosphere and took pride in the fact that a guest returned year after year.

Guests were inevitably drawn into a distinctive and tightly woven lifestyle regardless of how long they stayed. During the railroad-based period of tourism, the railroads exerted an influence that was much more pervasive than merely a means of moving people from one place to another. The railroad, with its relatively rigid physical constraints and efficiencies, was a determining factor on architecture and society (these being, as always, interrelated). The fundamental characteristics of the railroad demanded concentration rather than dispersal, both in time and place. This occurred first at stations of departure, then at the North Truro depot, and finally at the Highland House, where the absence of independent transportation meant that buildings and functions had to be clustered. In this respect the Highland House was only a relatively insignificant example of those enormous frame hotels that floated over the rolling terrain of the Cape and Islands like ocean liners during the era of railroad dominance, and which one by one ran aground and were abandoned in the unsympathetic times that followed.

The collective nature of resort life in the 1870–1920 period was, of necessity, especially visible at mealtimes. Marshall somewhat humorously describes how, since "all of the roomers ate at the 'Main House' [Highland House] it has been said that the roomers would sit on their front

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<sup>45</sup> Provincetown *Advocate*, Mar. 14, 1912.

<sup>46</sup> Truro assessors' reports.

<sup>47</sup> Telephone interview conducted by Larry Lowenthal with Irving Horton, June 9, 1992.

<sup>48</sup> Interview conducted by Larry Lowenthal with Robert Horton (son of Sumner), Sept. 9, 1993.





porches at meal times and when the hand dinner bell rang from the piazza of the 'Main House,' the roomers would make a dash for the dining room."<sup>49</sup> In those years before the isolating, encapsulating effects of automobiles and television took hold, people not only participated in group activities but were accustomed to creating their own entertainment. Fleeting newspaper items, light as the summer breeze, tell how vacationers took advantage of the ever-changing mix of talent at the Highland House. When there was a temporary aggregation of baseball players, they would challenge teams of "year-rounders" and even travel to Wellfleet to play. The baseball field for the Highland complex was located south of the road to the lighthouse, south and east of Beacon cottage, on land now occupied by the golf course. This suggests that in the first decades of the 20th century, when baseball was flourishing, either the golf course was much smaller, or else the two uses overlapped. In 1907 the guests organized a masquerade ball, which was held in the ballroom on the first floor of the Lodge.<sup>50</sup>

One of the most dynamic and innovative guests was J. Henry McKinley of New York City, who apparently spent many summers at the Highland House and eventually purchased some land on the nearby cliffs. He was, not surprisingly, an active sportsman. On more than one occasion he improved the golf course, presumably to bring it more in line with the increasing standardization that succeeded the sometimes bizarre individuality of course design in golfing's exuberant youth.<sup>51</sup> In another inspiration, McKinley organized a clambake on the beach.<sup>52</sup>

McKinley's most notable achievement, however, was to serve as president of the association that organized a pageant to observe the Pilgrim Tercentenary. The committee, consisting of both residents and guests, was organized at a meeting in the parlor of the Highland House on August 20, 1919. Its work culminated in a pageant one year later at which some 3000 people were present.<sup>53</sup> This event, while scarcely of national significance, was probably the most memorable departure from the customary tranquility in the history of the Highland House.

Mort Small was probably no longer intimately involved in the routine operation of the resort, but by the time the Highland House was completed he had himself become one of its main attractions. As he attained the status of local legend, guests delighted in gathering on Saturday evenings to hear his romantic tales of Cape Cod lore, some of which he published in his various booklets.<sup>54</sup> While his childhood recollections might not be literally accurate, he was one of the last

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<sup>49</sup> Marshall, *Truro, Cape Cod*, p. 104.

<sup>50</sup> Provincetown *Advocate*, August 15, 1907.

<sup>51</sup> The Provincetown *Advocate*, August 4, 1910, notes that "Mr. McKinley, a guest at the Highland House, has recently much improved the golf links by some changes." In his *Just a Little about the Lower Cape, Personal and Otherwise*, Isaac M. Small writes that the course was "relaid by me in 1913 from plans by Mr. J.H. McKinley.... Additions were made in 1921 also at the suggestion of Mr. McKinley." Whether the 1913 alteration was distinct from that of 1910 or due to a confusion of dates is uncertain. For trends in the history of golf, see Herbert Warren Wind, *The Story of American Golf*, 3rd ed., New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975.

<sup>52</sup> Provincetown *Advocate*, September 1, 1910.

<sup>53</sup> Small, *Just a Little*.

<sup>54</sup> Marshall, *Truro, Cape Cod*, p. 103.



individuals who could claim a personal acquaintance with Thoreau. He had researched and developed his own theory about the location of the Pilgrim Spring. Best of all, as the long summer twilight dimmed, he regaled his listeners with tales of the countless shipwrecks he had observed. While the nearby lighthouse provided ghostly illumination and the foghorn added spectral accompaniment, he spun lurid accounts of finding the human and other wreckage of the Portland washing up on the beach after the terrible storm of November 1898.

Like Mort Small, the Highland Light was a fixture of the local landscape. The resort did not necessarily develop because of its proximity to the lighthouse. Rather, both were situated to take advantage of the same natural assets of the location, i.e., high ground overlooking the water. Indeed, the bright, constantly revolving light may have been perceived as a nuisance by patrons of the resort. This is suggested by the orientation of the Highland House, which minimized its exposure to the lighthouse. As indicated by the location of the porch, the best views were considered to be north and northwest, over the dunes to Provincetown.

Gradually the light developed its own clientele of visitors who drove out to enjoy a scene that to many captured the essence of the Cape. Isaac M. Small, already deeply interested in the lighthouse for a variety of reasons, capitalized on the situation. As early as 1891 his brochure advertised that "At the Marine Signal Station [his home, the Cliff House] near the lighthouse, may be found a full assortment of photographs, confections, cigars, etc." Later he featured his own booklet recounting the history of the lighthouse.

The other main attraction of the Highland resort, the Atlantic Ocean, was more accessible during the peak period of the Highland House. For a number of years a rough staircase descended the cliffs. Even after that was washed away, a path was kept open so that access, though arduous, was possible. Conditions for bathing varied greatly from season to season, depending literally on the shifting sands. In 1903, for example, it was reported that "The bathing at Highland Light...is fine this season as the sand bars are so formed as to give either a still water or surf bath, and visitors of all ages and sizes are enjoying it."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Barnstable *Patriot*, July 20, 1903.



## LATER EVOLUTION OF THE HIGHLAND RESORT

### Effect of the Automobile

The first automobile on the road to the lighthouse made its appearance in September 1903.<sup>56</sup> Gradually their number increased, but without fundamentally altering the existing order. Usually they were seen as curiosities whose future was uncertain. Isaac M. Small may have welcomed them for bringing more customers to his souvenir shop. On August 30, 1906, in the very same column that reported the beginning of work on the Highland House, it was observed that "Three or four autos a day are not uncommon in the Highlands now. Horses in the vicinity are becoming more accustomed to them."<sup>57</sup> Thus the new hotel and the instrument of its eventual decline were brought into an unintentional but portentous conjunction.

The automobile ultimately doomed resorts on the style of the Highland House, because of the insulation and independence it provided. Nevertheless, the result was slow in coming. Customs and attitudes seemed to change more slowly than the technology. Many people who had formed their habits in the horse-and-buggy age clung to their old-fashioned vacation practices even while adopting the newer means of transportation. By the late 1920's, when the majority of its guests were probably arriving by auto, the physical layout and the pattern of life at the Highland House and Cottages remained largely intact. The only significant changes were those directly related to the means of travel. A substantial garage was completed in 1925, and the stable—a feature of the complex since its early days—disappears from the assessors' records after 1927.

Isaac M. Small must have assumed that his second wife would outlive him, since she was 15 years younger than he. That was not to be. She died in March 1933, and he survived nearly another year, following her on February 5, 1934, when he was almost 89. He had clung to his familiar routine, gazing out through his telescope into the final weeks of his life, and his last little book was in the hands of the printer when he died. After a period of sorting out family real estate, Isaac's only surviving child, Lillian M. Small, emerged with most of the Highland resort property. Since she lived in Buzzards Bay, the resort was apparently managed by Willard M. Small's two daughters, Evelyn Morton Stevens and Hazel D. Shorey, with the latter predominant.<sup>58</sup> Probate administration records indicate that income and routine maintenance continued even while the nation was still sunk in the Depression, although no major construction or renovation took place.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Barnstable *Patriot*, September 14, 1903.

<sup>57</sup> Provincetown *Advocate*.

<sup>58</sup> Telephone interview conducted by Larry Lowenthal with Irving Horton, June 9, 1992.

<sup>59</sup> Barnstable County Probate Case No. 24542 (estate of Isaac M. Small).





## End of the Small Family's Ownership

World War II forced decisions that had been deferred for several years. With Nazi submarines lurking off the coast and normal travel patterns disrupted, the Highland resort did not open for the 1942 season. By then Lillian M. Small was in her mid-sixties; with no children and living elsewhere, it was time for her to reconsider the status of the family resort. A formal survey of the property in 1945 signaled her intentions, but she died in March of the following year before she could act on them. Fred C. Small, her husband and executor, proceeded to sell the Highlands property to Harold J. Conklin of Paterson, NJ, on June 25, 1947.<sup>60</sup> This transaction comprised nearly 88 acres, consisting—with one notable exception—of all the land in the area that had been passed down in the Isaac Small family. With that stroke of the pen, the association of the Smalls with the Highland Light neighborhood—a relationship that extended back to the earliest days of settlement—suddenly ended.

The notable exception was the Cliff House. Under a 1937 deed from Lillian M. Small, Olive M. Williams—Isaac M. Small's longtime assistant—was given life tenancy in the house.<sup>61</sup> This carried out a provision of Isaac M. Small's will. Olive survived Lillian and was still living at the time of the transfer to Conklin in 1947; she died in September 1948. In 1952, Fred M. Small completed the disposal of the Highlands resort property by selling the Cliff House and its surrounding lots to William B. Spink of Boston.<sup>62</sup> Spink created a small resort separate from Conklin's, around the nucleus of the Cliff House, that was known as the Cliff House Colony. It was probably during this period that the Cliff House was divided into apartments.

In 1950, only three years after acquiring the property, Conklin sold the Highland Lodge (minus its large wing, which was gone by that time), to a couple from Provincetown.<sup>63</sup> To protect his interests, Conklin added a restrictive clause that "the said premises shall not be used for any commercial purpose of any kind, nature or description." After passing through the hands of an intermediate owner, the Lodge was moved by its owners Stanley and Esther Chamberlain to a new location on Old County Road, South Truro, in 1962. It remains at that site.

Hal Conklin was representative of a type frequently associated with the declining stages of obsolescent institutions. These operators characteristically have the instincts and ambitions of the entrepreneur, but not the capital and often not the managerial ability. Whether from nostalgia, lack of imagination, or lack of resources to pursue grander schemes, they tend to be drawn to fading or outdated enterprises. They seem to combine the small businessman's craving for independence with the amateur's sincere affection for some interest or entity—a combination that is often charming but seldom conducive to business success. Conklin's first love was the golf course. He was an avid

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<sup>60</sup> Barnstable County Registry of Deeds, Book 673, p. 242.

<sup>61</sup> Barnstable County Registry of Deeds, Book 525, p. 198.

<sup>62</sup> Barnstable County Registry of Deeds, Book 825, pp. 5-6.

<sup>63</sup> Barnstable County Registry of Deeds, Book 758, p. 507.



player, and in 1955 he modernized and virtually rebuilt the course. However, this emphasis worked to the detriment of the rest of the complex.<sup>64</sup>

When Hal Conklin and his wife Estelle reopened the Highland House resort in 1947, the complex still retained an appearance characteristic of the second period of tourism. Except for the removal of the bowling alley, the main structures of the complex had remained unchanged since the 1920's, if not earlier. It soon became evident, however, that changing social patterns would make it impossible for the resort to operate successfully on the old basis. The resort had reached a point where it would have to be adapted to new conditions if it were to survive. Carrying a heavy mortgage, the Conklins sought to respond to this challenge while lacking the resources to undertake major alterations.

One example of this was the modifications made to the Highland House due to the demolition of the Coleraine cottage. The Coleraine had previously housed the bar; there had never been a bar in the Highland House itself. When the Coleraine developed a severe roof leak, Hal Conklin attempted to repair it in his usual hasty, low-cost style by pouring a thick, solid concrete roof. The structure was unable to bear the weight and began to sag. It had to be demolished in the mid-1950's. The Conklins therefore created a new bar facility in the Highland House: they replaced the north-facing section of the wraparound porch, which had offered the most striking views, with a shed-roofed addition to house the bar.

By the mid-1950's, there was a clear change in clientele and operation of the resort. Most of the earlier recreational, service, and agricultural structures were gone. Little remained of the group-generated good times that characterized the second period of tourism. Only the golf course survived among the multitude of organized recreational facilities once offered by the Smalls. It endured because of Hal Conklin's personal devotion, and because it was open to the public and did not rely on guests. The bar became increasingly popular with local residents, but the large dining room had to be closed.

With more and more casual sightseers driving up to the lighthouse, concession emphasis shifted to offering souvenirs and snacks. To serve and expand this emerging market, Conklin moved the Pilgrim cottage to the south side of the road near the edge of the lighthouse lot, where it was used as a hot dog stand. It was not especially successful in this manifestation, and in 1957 two of Conklin's employees, Joe Colliano and Bill Hastings, purchased it, moved it back to the north side of the road, and converted it to apartments.<sup>65</sup> Colliano and Hastings also purchased the hot dog stand/souvenir shop that had stood near the lighthouse and moved it to the north side of the road, as well. There it formed a compact cluster with the Pilgrim cottage and the Jobi craft shop (which they built) on a lot of slightly less than one acre.

Further fragmentation of the former Highland resort occurred in the early 1960's, perhaps in anticipation of the establishment of the Cape Cod National Seashore. Legislation to create the Seashore had been introduced by that time, but the outcome was by no means certain, nor could the

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<sup>64</sup> Interview conducted by Larry Lowenthal with Joe Colliano and Bill Hastings, June 4, 1992. Appraisals in Cape Cod National Seashore Land File 16-2500 also describe work done on the golf course.

<sup>65</sup> Interviews conducted by Larry Lowenthal with Joe Colliano and Bill Hastings, June 4, 1992, and Sept. 1, 1993.





extent or manner of land taking be predicted.<sup>66</sup> In 1960 the Conklins subdivided the cottage cluster on the south side of Highland Road into five tiny lots (Parcels A through E), all but one of which included a building. Four of the lots contained 9,375 square feet, and one had 6,785 square feet; collectively, they totaled slightly more than one acre. All were soon sold to persons from urban areas of the Northeast, as follows:

Parcel A (Beacon cottage) to Tom and Pauline Slade of West Peabody, MA, February 15, 1960 [deed reference 1070:522]

Parcel B to Jean Bennett of Yonkers, NY, October 29, 1960 [deed reference 1096:233]. This was the smallest parcel and did not include a building. Soon after, Bennett moved a small structure that had been part of a gas station to the site to serve as a cottage<sup>67</sup>

Parcel C (Haven cottage) to Eugene and Aldo Travaglini of New Haven, CT, and their wives, February 15, 1960 [deed reference 1071:392]

Parcel D to Muriel A. Benoy and Frances E. Whitney of Pompton Lakes, NJ, February 15, 1960 [deed reference 10170:524]. This parcel contained a small cottage called "Driftwood" that had been moved to the site

Parcel E (Rock cottage) to Joseph, Jr., and Gertrude G. Newbold of Franklin Lakes, NJ, February 15, 1960 [deed reference 1070:520]

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<sup>66</sup> Francis P. Burling, *The Birth of the Cape Cod National Seashore* (Plymouth, MA: Leyden Press, 1977).

<sup>67</sup> Interview conducted by Larry Lowenthal with Joe Colliano and Bill Hastings, September 1, 1993.



## PURCHASE BY THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The question of whether the increasingly anachronistic Highland House operation could have continued was made moot by the creation of the Cape Cod National Seashore. On July 30, 1964, the Conklins sold their remaining holdings to the National Park Service. These included the Highland House, the Millstone and Mayflower cottages, the former Sumner Horton farmhouse (former Adams cottage, which the Conklins had purchased in 1955 as their residence), and the golf course. With the same romantic impracticality that brought them to the Highlands, the Conklins used the proceeds to purchase a similar summer resort in Laconia, NH.

The arrival of the National Park Service did not bring an immediate end to the Highland House's resort role. The Conklins had reserved a right to continue to operate the Highland resort for 3 more years, with a right to renew for 2 years beyond that. The Conklins transferred these rights to Colliano and Hastings. The two men exercised both options, operating the property as a resort through 1969. This twilight period was known as the "Jobi" era (from Joe and Bill).

Many of the characteristics of the resort in its palmier days persisted during these years. The Highland House and the remaining cottages continued to be used largely for their original purposes. Colliano and Hastings even resumed operation of the dining room.<sup>68</sup> They divided the large first-story room by means of a plywood partition to create a separate lounge/breakfast nook in the section nearest the lobby.

There was a distinct hierarchy of renting during this period, based on the availability of bath facilities, with the second floor of the Highland House last on the list. Normally it was used by the help or by young people who could not afford the better rooms, and was rented to ordinary guests only as a last resort. This reversal of priorities due to the relative accessibility of indoor plumbing is reflected in the room rates. In the Jobi period (1964-69), rooms in the Highland House were rented to young persons at \$10 per week, while the rate in the cottages was \$12 a night, double occupancy, including maid service.<sup>69</sup> In contrast, Marshall reports that in 1919 the \$6-a-week rate at the Highland House was equal to the Adams, Haven, and Millstone cottages, while the old Highland Lodge was at the lower end of the scale at \$2.50.<sup>70</sup>

The names of some important executives were found in the guest register during the final years of operation, according to Colliano and Hastings. Another distinct category of visitor was old women who had been chambermaids at the hotel in their youth. What these women felt can only be surmised: the Highland House's general appearance seemed remarkably unchanged, yet differences in details, and in the behavior and expectations of the guests, were undeniable. Other than those who were motivated by sentiment, visitors to the Highland resort presumably were attracted by the exceptional scenery, relatively low rates, and the lingering essence of a more carefree age.

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<sup>68</sup> Interview conducted by Larry Lowenthal with Joe Colliano and Bill Hastings, June 4, 1992.

<sup>69</sup> Interview conducted by Larry Lowenthal with Joe Colliano and Bill Hastings, June 4, 1992.

<sup>70</sup> Marshall, *Truro, Cape Cod*, p. 105.



With the trend of events unmistakably clear, Colliano and Hastings took an action that would have far-reaching effects. They gave the Truro Historical Society space in the Millstone cottage's relatively primitive rear wing, in an effort to increase the chances of the cottage's survival. This established the Historical Society's presence at the resort, which would enable the society to ask the National Park Service in the early 1970's for the use of the Highland House as a museum.

Those years were precarious ones for the structures at the former resort. The National Park Service was at that time primarily interested in acquiring open land for the national seashore. It therefore pursued a policy of auctioning off the buildings on the properties that it purchased, with the stipulation that the new owners move the buildings elsewhere. This was the case with the Millstone and Mayflower cottages in 1971. Millstone cottage went to Pond Road, while Mayflower became an office and additional rooms for a motor inn on Route 6, both in North Truro.

The Park Service also bought two other of the resort's properties that had not been acquired in 1964—Pilgrim cottage and the Cliff House. Joe Colliano and Bill Hastings sold the land beneath the Pilgrim cottage and the Jobi shop to the Park Service in 1972, but retained ownership of the buildings themselves. The next year, they relocated the cottage (and the Jobi shop) yet again to another location on South Highland Road, where it remains today.<sup>71</sup> This otherwise unexceptional building, true to its name, has thus been moved at least five times during its life.

The Cliff House was purchased by the Park Service from William Spink on February 1, 1974.<sup>72</sup> Spink reserved the right to move the building by May 31, 1974. He failed to do so by the deadline, and the Park Service assumed control. The house then stood vacant for almost a decade until a Board of Survey process was initiated in 1983. By then the structure was only 20 feet from the edge of the eroding cliff. An auction of the building took place on April 29, 1983, and on May 12, the bid of Daniel Del Gizzi was accepted. The house was moved between August 3 and August 16, 1983, traveling about 1 1/4 miles to a new location on Alden Road.<sup>73</sup> There it remains, although it has been extensively altered.

The loss of so many structures left conspicuous gaps in the historical continuity and integrity of the resort. The Highland House was not exempt from this trend. Its early east extension, which had become badly deteriorated, was torn down in 1974. The original southeast ell met the same fate in 1982. In retrospect, it seems likely that the Truro Historical Society's interest in the Highland House helped prevent the removal of the main structure until it was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places in 1975.

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<sup>71</sup> Interviews conducted by Larry Lowenthal with Joe Colliano and Bill Hastings, June 4, 1992, and Sept. 1, 1993.

<sup>72</sup> Barnstable County Registry of Deeds, Book 2002, p. 344.

<sup>73</sup> File no. S7417, Cape Cod NS. The lot where the Cliff House now sits is part of a tract of land purchased by Joe Colliano and Bill Hastings with the proceeds they received from selling their Highland-resort properties to the National Park Service. They subdivided the tract into lots, and brought in the Pilgrim cottage and the Jobi shop from Highland Road in 1973. They also sold off lots to others, including Daniel Del Gizzi, who brought in the Cliff House some 10 years later. The three buildings today form a small "refugee" colony from the old Highland resort.







